

## Tips for Preparing a Successful Vermont 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Application

### The bottom line

- Programs must serve the neediest students
- The framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning must drive programming decisions
- Program directors, site leaders, and instructors must have clear expectations and adequate funding to lead an exemplary program

**First Steps** Read the VT 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Request for Proposal document.

**Planning** 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs are developed and implemented as partnerships between schools and community organizations and/ or individuals who want to change the lives of students. The following steps will greatly increase your chances of success:

- Organize multiple planning meetings to prepare the application
- Survey students, parents, and other stakeholders
- Involve key players from the school, community organizations and surrounding community in the planning process
- Allow plenty of time to prepare your proposal carefully and thoughtfully. Do not rush through the process.
- Access the VTDOE Web resources regularly throughout the planning process
  - <http://vermontafterschool.pbwiki.com/>
  - [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_federal/21st\\_CCLC.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_federal/21st_CCLC.html)

### Writing Tips

**General Presentation:** Use plain English. Include a mixture of bullets, charts, and text. If you can't make a point in less than 35 words, the point needs to be rethought.

- Follow the formatting guidelines carefully and precisely.
- A *table of contents* should identify the page number for each of the major sections of the application, in addition to any appendices.
- Avoid cluttering pages with text, using several different fonts, spacing text erratically, and inserting pictures or symbols
- Use footers and include page numbers and the title of the document

### **Narrative:**

- Structure your narrative by answering each question from the RFP section by section
- Assure that your narrative makes clear the proposal's vision by the end of the third page or you will lose the reader
- Use addenda strategically to support the narrative

### **Common Omissions:**

- Statistical data to back assertions
- Evidence of planning meetings and community input
- Overview of existing programs. Include program name, program site, numbers served before 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC application, projected numbers served with 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program and an explanation of the nature of expansion, if any

- Program detail: numbers of students served, regular attendees, schedules, days, offerings, sites, ratios, curriculum, rationale, staffing configurations

### **Budget:**

All costs must be *reasonable* and *necessary* to carry out your project. Be specific about how the funds will be used and link them clearly to your program narrative.

- Make sure costs for administration and direct instruction are balanced with not more than 30-40% of the budget allocated toward administration.
- Include specific details in the budget narrative for each section such as precise FICA and other benefit costs, hourly wages, and number of contract days.
- Have per participant cost be between \$700-\$1400, or \$1400-\$2800 per regular attendee served, or use a cost per student hour calculation
- Budget for a minimum of two hours of program time per day
- Budget to offer programs 5 days per week
- Do not request funds for "miscellaneous" or other purposes using vague language.
- Do not request funds for anything that is not directly related to the 21<sup>st</sup> Community Learning Centers program described in the narrative.
- Do not request funds for construction projects

### **Other Steps:**

- **Proofread your proposal.** Ask colleagues who have not been involved in the proposal's development to proofread the proposal. Reviewers will not give your proposal the benefit of the doubt if information is missing, spelling errors change the meaning of sentences, or information is presented in a confusing manner.
- **Check your budget figures for consistency and accuracy**
- **Use the checklist** printed in the application package to ensure that all required information is included.
- **Submit your proposal by the deadline date.**
- **Make copies.** Go through each copy carefully to make sure all the pages are included.

## Application Tips by Section

Section	Tips
<b><u>1. Planning (5 points)</u></b>	
A. Provide a brief summary of the planning process used to submit this application. Using cover sheet B, list the planning meetings and writing sessions that occurred to create this application.	Use this section to articulate the basic program design and vision right from at the beginning. Cover sheet B: Include a sufficient level of detail to show that a wide variety of partners were involved in the planning process; list names and titles.
<b><u>2. Program Need (10 Points)</u></b> (no more than 3 pages)	
<p>A. <b>Community Need.</b> Provide an evaluation of the community needs including the needs of students and their families. (5 points)</p> <p>B. <b>Family Needs and Student Learning.</b> Describe how the proposed programs will address the needs of students and their families (including the needs of working families) and how the programs are expected to improve student learning, including learning in core academic areas such as reading/language arts, mathematics, or science. (3 points)</p> <p>C. <b>Principles of Effectiveness.</b> Describe how the program will be based on the following "principles of effectiveness" (2 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientifically based research that provides evidence that the program will help students meet state and local student academic achievement standards</li> <li>An assessment of objective data (see data sources listed in Appendix F of this application) regarding the need for the out-of-school programs</li> </ul>	<p>The answers to these questions do not need to exceed one page.</p> <p>Make clear why an afterschool program is needed</p> <p>Complete a survey and compile the results.</p> <p>Review the resources at <a href="http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_federal/21st_CCLC.html">http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_federal/21st_CCLC.html</a></p> <p>More than 3-5 citations are not necessary, but each citation should clearly show that the program design is supported by scientific research.</p> <p><u>Common problem:</u> A long string of statistics is listed, without clear links that data informed program design and that the afterschool program (s) are an obvious solution to the articulated needs.</p>

## **2. Program Design (40 Points)**

- A. Program Description. Describe the range and type of programs (afterschool, before school, summer, weekend, and/or evening) that will be offered. Specify the number of students that will be served, projected regular attendees and their ages or grade levels. Include an expected daily schedule, staff qualifications and staffing ratios, and information on how many hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year the programs will be offered. If programs will be offered at more than one site, include information on the number of sites and the range of programming at each. For existing programs, provide a one page addendum summarizing the performance outcomes from the past five years. (15 points)

Begin the whole proposal or this section with a short, concise introduction. Include program locations, numbers served, and program highlights using bullets.

Include the following data in a table for each site where programs will take place: total school population, numbers served, regular attendees (30 days or more served), grade levels served, total program weeks, % low income served, number programs offered per year by type.

Include a schedule using bullets including: school dismissal time, snack and recess time, program blocks, program end time.

Include program components that have 4:1 staffing or better. Include wages that will attract high quality staff.

Use multiple spaces for programs (library, gym, classrooms).

Common problems: Program descriptions are 1-3 words. Use 25-35 words and Include program component length, i.e. x hrs per week for y weeks.

The academic components are under-resourced

An educational vision for programming is not articulated

B. **Elements of High-Quality Programming.** Describe how the elements below will be addressed and incorporated into the Program Design. (25 points)

- 1) **Linkages to the School Day.** Describe the ways in which the program will be connected to the regular school day (e.g., shared staff, space, training, policies, curriculum, leadership support, instructional methods, etc.).
- 2) **High-Quality Staff.** Who will be hired to teach in the afterschool program? What standards will be set to recruit and retain high-quality staff? What professional development training will staff participate in and why?
- 3) **Safe and Appropriate Environment.** Describe what actions will be taken to ensure that every child is physically and emotionally safe in the program.
- 4) **High-Interest Programming.** Describe the type of programming that will be offered for each age level. What efforts will be made to ensure that programming is student-centered and that every participant has a high interest in what he/she is doing?
- 5) **Regular Attendees.** How will program schedules and offerings be designed to encourage and support regular participation among students?
- 6) **Instructional Leadership.** What expectations will be set for afterschool instructors with regards to lesson planning, course development, and student outcomes?
- 7) **Flexible Structures and Student Choice.** How will the program ensure that each participating student is offered a variety of age-appropriate learning and enrichment opportunities? How will the program use flexible structures and varied instructional activities to accommodate students with different learning needs and learning paces?

Use the resources the VTDOE has developed to inform your plan

Common mistakes:

Proposal does not include specific commitments or linkages with current school day staff, superintendents, and principals.

Only a few rooms are available for the program to use; the program should be able to use multiple spaces in the school and community

Staff are only a few core part-time people as opposed to having core staff PLUS a mixture of school and community based professionals.

Program focuses on numbers served, not the quality of service

Teacher expectations are not set or are unclear

A variety of strategies, structures, and times are not offered to recruit and retain students

Scope of project is too large

Separate ages need separate programs (k, elementary, middle, high school) and the differences are not articulated

<p><b>3. Program Management (10 Points)</b></p> <p>A. <b>Program Leadership.</b> Each application must include a director at a minimum of 30 hours per week. In hiring a director for the program, what types of qualifications and background experience will be required? What characteristics are you looking for in a director and how will this person fit into the existing structure of the organization? (3 points)</p> <p>B. <b>School Leadership Support.</b> How will the program connect with and support the regular school day? In what ways will the school principal, superintendent, or other school leaders support the program? (3 points)</p> <p>C. <b>Information Dissemination.</b> How will the organization disseminate information about the program, including evaluation results, to the community in a manner that is understandable and accessible? (2 points)</p> <p>D. <b>Transportation.</b> Describe the transportation plan for how students will travel safely to and from the program and home. (1 points)</p> <p>E. <b>Volunteers.</b> Describe how you will use volunteers, including qualified seniors, in the running, oversight, and promotion of the program. (1 point)</p>	<p>Make sure the job, hours and salary are clearly articulated. Include sustainability and instructional leadership as an integral part of the Project Director job.</p> <p>Outline a clear governance structure or advisory team and a schedule for meetings and oversight.</p> <p>Use multiple approaches. Include strategies to communicate with <u>students and parents</u> as well as more general communication strategies. Examples include: brochures, lunch/assembly presentations, phone calls, posters, newspapers, staff meetings, school board meetings, community meetings, parent conferences.</p> <p>Transportation “must be addressed” by law. Explore the opportunities of car-pooling and minivans as well as extra school bus runs.</p>
<p><b>4. Program Evaluation (5 Points)</b></p> <p>A. <b>Program Goals and Objectives.</b> Identify the areas of primary focus for your evaluation and describe the measurements you will use to determine success including clearly defined program goals, numeric objectives, and specific outcomes. Include a description of who will carry out the work of the evaluation plan and evidence that the plan is realistic. (5 points)</p>	<p>Chose no more than 3-5 goals/objectives. Choose a combination of quantitative and qualitative assessments. Include short and longer-term objectives.</p> <p>Include funds and a plan to support a qualified project director to implement the evaluation or to hire an outside evaluation consultant or both</p> <p><u>Common Problem:</u> Evaluation indicators are chosen that cannot be measured annually.</p> <p>Objectives are not meaningful or realistic</p>

<p><b><u>5. Budget and Budget Narrative (10 Points)</u></b></p> <p>The budget and budget narrative must demonstrate a detailed and logical connection to the goals of the project and should be specific enough to give reviewers a clear idea of your priorities and the focus for funding. At a minimum, the budget must include:</p> <p>A. <b>Budget Items.</b> Provide a detailed budget including separate line items for staff (direct service), administration (non-direct service), social security, health benefits, supplies, equipment, transportation to and from the program, staff travel, professional development, and contracted services. The budget line item descriptions must include sufficient detail (e.g., number of hours work per week at what rate of pay and for how many weeks per year). (5 points)</p> <p>B. <b>Budget Narrative.</b> Provide a detailed narrative describing how the items within the budget support the goals of the project. (5 points)</p>	<p>Have your budget be in even dollars.</p> <p>21<sup>st</sup> Century funds can support programs offered to parents/guardians of students, but not to the general community.</p> <p><u>Common Problems:</u></p> <p>The budget is too high for the start-up year</p> <p>Large equipment purchases over 10% are requested</p> <p>Supply requests are too low: Up to 5% of the total budget is acceptable</p> <p>Indirect costs are requested but not allowed unless approved by the VTDOE finance unit.</p>
<p><b><u>6. Capacity for Success and Sustainability (20 Points)</u></b></p> <p>A. <b>Memorandum of Agreement between Key Partners.</b> Using the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) form that is included with this application, develop and submit a signed MOA that defines the service and program implementation agreements between the key partners. The MOA should describe the nature and details of the partnerships between the LEA(s), community-based organization(s), and other public or private organization(s) or partners with evidence that teachers, parents, principal(s), district and/or community leaders were involved in designing the proposed programs and will assist in their implementation. Key partners are directly responsible for the implementation of the program. Key partners can be individuals. (10 points)</p> <p>B. <b>Sustainability Plan.</b> Describe the plans for the continuous strengthening of the partnership between the local educational agency, community-based organization, and another public or private organization (if appropriate), including plans for continuing the proposed programs beyond the 3-5 year period of grant funding. Attach a preliminary sustainability plan chart. (10 points)</p>	<p>Only complete one Memorandum of Agreement per application</p> <p>Attach a sustainability chart and provide a short narrative</p> <p>Consider implementing fees at the opening of programs</p> <p>For program expansion: Include program name, program site, numbers served and other outcome data for both "pre and post application". Provide new projected numbers served and/or the explanation of the nature of a program expansion</p> <p>List past successes to prove that investing in your project is a wise investment of tax dollars.</p>